

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

914
82748
PROSPECTS FOR FARMING AFTER THE WAR

Transcription by Dr. Arthur Raper and Dr. Rensis Likert, Bureau of Agricultural Economics; and Wallace Kadderly, Radio Service. United States Department of Agriculture. Recorded January 2, 1945. Time: 8 minutes, 3 seconds without announcer's parts.

ANNOUNCER (LIVE): Now, by transcription, here's Wallace Kadderly of the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, with another of the discussions we've been bringing you from time to time on agricultural questions after the war. What's the question today, Wallace?

TRANSCRIPTION

KADDERLY: I have in mind three questions rather than just one. We've picked them out of reports made recently by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. These reports are based on interviews with farmers in many parts of the country. Two of the people who directed these studies are here with me . . . Dr. Rensis Likert and Dr. Arthur Raper. Dr. Raper, first let's take this question . . . I believe it's one most everybody's interested in . . . "what are the prospects for farm income after the war"? How did farmers answer that one?

RAPER: The majority are pretty optimistic about farm incomes for the first two or three years after the war. Two-thirds of them think farm incomes will continue at something like present levels.

LIKERT: Farmers in the Corn Belt and the Central Valley of California, particularly, feel that way.

KADDERLY: That's the first two or three years after the war. But what do farmers expect in the long run, Dr. Likert?

LIKERT: The majority said they expect a price drop eventually, but they're hopeful that a depression can be staved off . . .

RAPER: Some are none too hopeful, though. The belief that depressions are bound to follow war seems deep-rooted in the farmer's thinking.

KADDERLY: Then farmers are worried about a depression after this war?

LIKERT: Yes and no. In spite of this feeling about a farm price drop after the war, on the whole they are not too pessimistic over the future of agriculture. You'd say the same thing, wouldn't you, Raper?

RAPER: Yes, I would. Nearly half the farmers we talked to said they think they're worrying less than their fathers did about being able to support themselves in their old age. More than half think it will be easier for young people to make a decent living on farms than it was for their fathers.

KADDERLY: Did they explain why they feel this way, Dr. Raper?

RAPER: They think it will be easier because farmers are more progressive now. They use more machinery. They pay more attention to conservation of soil and water. Seeds are greatly improved, and that takes a lot of hazard out of farming. Live-stock breeds are better than they used to be. Modern methods of controlling pests, too, are a great help. Electricity not only helps get the work done, but it makes living on the farm more enjoyable.

KADDERLY: So actually, farmers are not too pessimistic on the outlook for postwar incomes.

RAPER: Generally speaking, that's true.

KADDERLY: Now, let's pass on to the next question. I might put the question this way: Do farmers want some sort of Government regulation of farm production?

LIKERT: On that one, the answers vary considerably for different parts of the country. In the Corn Belt, nearly three-fifths of the farmers we talked to thought they should be free with regard to their production plans.

RAPER: We should point this out, though . . . a minority in the Corn Belt felt differently about it. And this minority is a good-sized one.

LIKERT: You're right, Raper. Two-fifths . . . and that's what it was . . . is a strong minority. Now, in the South, nearly 70 percent of the farmers we talked to favor planned production. On the other hand, in the Central Valley of California, farmers were about evenly divided. So you see how it went. . .

KADDERLY: Yes . . . but even so, what you've said indicates a strong farmer opinion that goes in the direction of planned production.

LIKERT: I think it's correct to call it that . . . a fairly strong trend.

RAPER: To me, Likert, an interesting slant was this: Farmers' attitudes toward crop control seem closely related to how farmers estimate their own security. Broadly speaking, farmers are most favorable to crop controls in those parts of the country where farming risks are greatest. You see what I'm driving at . . . many farmers put a high value on security.

LIKERT: You're right there. Even Corn Belt farmers want Government action if risks become too great. They say they think if farm prices drop too sharply after the war, the Government should step in and do something about it.

KADDERLY: Now, let's have our third question . . . one we hear discussed often . . . it has to do with postwar farm spending. From 1940 to 1944, property of farmers increased from around 54 billion dollars to about 83 billion dollars. This increase included Government bonds; and savings, too. Farmers also paid off millions of dollars worth of debts. So on the whole farmers are in pretty good financial shape.

Now, Dr. Raper, how did farmers reply to the question on how they will spend their money after the war?

RAPER: Some say they're going to hang on to it.

KADDERLY: Play it safe . . . eh?

LIKERT: That's it. They remember what happened after the last war. But even so, three-fifths of the farmers are planning sizable purchases. Tractors and farm machinery head the list. One out of every four farmers told us he's planning to buy a tractor or some other farm machinery after the war. Automobiles and trucks come next . . . with one out of five farmers planning to buy. Then the next items are home furnishings, electricity, land purchases and dwelling improvements.

RAPER: I think we should point out, Likert, that much of this planned spending is to satisfy the desires of farm families to raise their levels of living. In the South, for example, many farm tenants now plan to buy some land after the war. In the Western Plains, farmers are planning for more comfortable dwellings. Probably the best illustrations of all, are the plans farmers have to secure electricity after the war, or, if they have current now, to buy additional electrical equipment. For example, many of the farm families that already have washing machines and radios, are now looking forward to running water and family-size freezer lockers.

KADDERLY: Farmers have bought a lot of war bonds. What did they say they're planning to do with those bonds?

LIKERT: A lot of them have no specific plans. . . but many do and they're long-range plans. They'll use the bonds for the childrens' education . . . or funds for their old age . . . or a reserve if there's a depression . . . plans of that sort rather than plans for immediate use.

KADDERLY: Gentlemen, I wish we had time to discuss farmers' views on many of the other questions I know were asked . . . how many farmers will there be after the war . . . will a public works program be needed . . . what should post-war rural health facilities be. All questions of great interest to farm people. But let's wind up this discussion with just one more thing. Dr. Likert, tell us a little about how you went about the job of collecting these farmers' opinions. Who were the farmers? How did you reach them?

LIKERT: The first point is that we worked in two groups. Raper worked in one and I the other. My group got its information from farmers in three major farming areas . . . the Corn Belt, the South, and the Central Valley of California. Trained field workers interviewed individual farmers who were selected through scientific sampling procedures. The interviewers were not free to make choices in the selection of these farmers.

KADDERLY: How was your group handled, Dr. Raper?

RAPER: We used quite a different method. We gathered our information in 32 counties scattered all over the country. We selected our farmers very carefully . . . usually with the help of the county agricultural agent . . . so they would be representative of the various types of farmers in the particular county.

KADDERLY: But you didn't send questionnaires. You talked direct to the farmers as Dr. Likert's group did?

RAPER: Yes. Representatives from our Regional Offices who make regular observations in these counties talked with these farmers. This opinion survey was incidental to their routine work in these counties.

KADDERLY: And then you pooled the results of both studies?

RAPER: Yes, parts of the results of both studies . . . and it's interesting that even though the field methods were somewhat different, the overall conclusions were much the same.

LIKERT: Also, we should make it clear that although the two surveys covered three major farming areas and 32 widely scattered counties, the combined sample we took was fairly small.

KADDERLY: Yet, you feel the studies give a pretty good cross-section of farmer opinion for the whole country.

LIKERT: Yes, we do. That's why the Bureau of Agricultural Economics has made the information public. We feel farmers would find these results of interest in their discussions of farm situations and problems that are likely to face us after the war.

- - -

ANNOUNCER: (LIVE) You've heard, by transcription, Dr. Rensis Likert, Dr. Arthur Raper, and Wallace Kaddery of the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington. If you'd like additional information on the Department's survey of farmers' opinions on postwar questions, see your county agricultural agent or write the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Ask for "Postwar Prospects."

#

